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THE STORY OF AN EGYPTIAN POLITICIAN

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Among Egyptian objects offered for sale to the Oriental Institute expedition of the University of Chicago during 1919-20 was the stela which is described herewith. It has been available only in a squeeze, from which the hand copy and the photograph here shown were taken.¹ The squeeze shows a rectangular slab 39 cm. high by 58 cm. wide to the outer edges of its frame. The photograph was made from the back of the squeeze to bring the design into relief. But the original stone was carved *en creux*. The beginning of its inscription ran horizontally from right to left; the remainder stood in columns, beginning at the right. Of these, lines 2-10 extend to the bottom edge and are ruled apart on the stone. The columns beyond (ll. 11-15), short and without separation, seem to serve also as labels for the man and woman standing at the left. After first discussing the inscription, the decoration, style, and content of the tablet together may be interpreted historically.

We are first introduced to an autobiography:

The sole companion, the general, the chief of interpreters, *Dmy*, says:

"I was general in this city. I did what the great liked and the humble praised. As for any general who went down, I 'got on famously with'² him because of the goodness of my saying(s) and the excellence of my counsel.

"I went down 'against' Abydos, taking along 'Mahesa.'¹ I caused that he go down to his house (i.e., temple) in the midst of the city. The people 'prevailed' not who went down against him.

"I taxed the people of Wawat for any overlord who arose in 'this' nome, and spoiled the people of *Gwt* at <his> command. I was praised therefor.

"I furnished my father's house, and filled it with luxuries. I made a boat of fifty (cubits). I gave bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked.

"I went forth; I went down into my tomb."

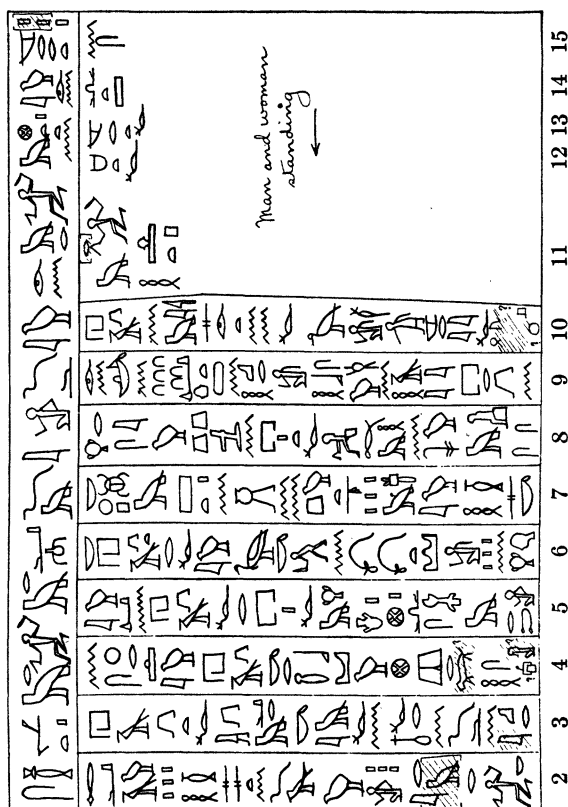
¹ The hand copy gives many unusual forms in facsimile. For the photograph the two halves of the squeeze were not exactly adjusted; hence the duplication of the division between ll. 9 and 10 and of the hieroglyph above it in l. 1. The signs above the man and woman are blurred on the squeeze itself.

² Symbols used are as follows: ' ' uncertain; < > scribal omission; [] lost but restored; () explanatory additions by editor. Transliterations are italicized. Initial "reed-leaf" of the Egyptian is represented by *ʿ*, medial and final by *y*.



STELA OF DMY

Photographed from a squeeze



After this autobiography, ending with its ostensible author's account of his own death, comes the concluding statement that the tablet was "made for him by his first-born son, his beloved, [—], the general, Hotep, and his wife, his beloved, N-teshnes."

The distinct sections of the inscription may now be taken up in detail.

I. INTRODUCTION

Titles and name.—The sign $m\check{s}^c$ in our hero's title of "general," here and throughout the document, differs decidedly from its usual form, for instead of bow and quiver the kneeling figure holds in his hands a whip and knife or dagger. The last title, "chief of interpreters," is appropriate to one connected with the administration of Nubia.¹ The name *Dmy* is apparently unique. The m is poorly made; but it can scarcely be an 3-bird, for such few names as begin with $D\check{3}$ seem all to use the consonant-group sign Δ . "He says" is rendered by the pseudo-participle dd , as in the Sixth Dynasty tombs of Shedû (Petrie, *Deshasheh*, Pl. XXV, republished in *Urk.*, I, 90) and Khui (*Urk.*, I, 140) and on the stela of Ehi (Cairo 1,596, published in *Urk.*, I, 150).

II. AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1. *Military career.*—"I was general" is expressed in the usual Egyptian idiom, literally: "I made (i.e., filled the office of) general." *Dmy's* boast: "I did what the great liked and the humble praised," is a common one, found, e.g., in the Middle Kingdom on Cairo stela 20,504 and in the preceding period on Cairo 1,759 (partially published in *Urk.*, I, 151; cf. Berlin *zettel*). "I did what men liked and the gods praised" occurs instead in a tomb of the same interim period at Siut (Griffith, *The Inscriptions of Siut and Der Rifeh*, Pl. XIV, l. 62). In writing $nd\check{s}\cdot w$ our scribe has omitted the $\check{s}$, and the evil bird that serves as determinative is strangely made with a split tail! The beginning of the next phrase is partially blank on the squeeze, but the reading $^{2}r ^{2}my ^{2}r^{3}-m\check{s}^c nb$, due to one of Professor

¹ F. W. Read in *Bull. de l'inst. franç. d'archéol. orientale*, XIII (1917), 141-44, supplementing the conclusions of Gardiner and Peet in *PSBA*, XXXVII (1915), shows that the title 𓂏 is applied to Thoth in *Book of the Dead*, chap. 125, and may therefore originally have meant "scholar."

Breasted's kind suggestions, seems certain. The verbal adjective *h3y.ty.fy* which follows implies the frequency of such a "going down." "I 'got on famously with' him" is only a tentative translation. The verb *ꜥ* is certainly in the first person, since it is followed by the pseudo-participle *m^cr.k(wy)*, in which the *k* is made exactly as in lines 4, 6, and 7. Use of the preposition *m* instead of *hn^c* or *m^c* prevents rendering "I returned prosperously with him" or "from him" respectively. So some idiomatic use such as we have assumed is indicated. The self-laudatory "because of the goodness of my sayings and the excellence of my counsel" is on a par with such Old Kingdom phrases as "I was one who said and repeated good things" (*Urk.*, I, 78), "I was one who said the good and repeated the good" (*ibid.*, 90 and 150), and "I was one who said the good and repeated what was liked" (*ibid.*, 122 and 132). The last square of line 3 is not completely clear on the squeeze. One might read *ꜥg*, "splendor"; but *ꜥkr*, "excellence," is preferable not only because the *k* and *r* of *hkr* in line 9 show the same form and arrangement, but also on account of such parallels as "I was one excellent in counsel, profitable to his city" (Griffith, *op. cit.*, Pl. XI, l. 4).

2. *Religious zeal*.—"I went down 'against' Abydos" implies for our document a source farther up the Nile, since the verb *h3y* clearly connotes "go downstream" in such cases as Harkhuf's return from Yam (*Urk.*, I, 128⁸ and 129¹²). As the original became known to Professor Breasted through a Luxor dealer, it was possibly found at Thebes itself. The preposition *r* may be either "to" or "against." If the latter be adopted, the next sentences may mean that *Dmy* made an expedition against Abydos, bearing with him an image of his god whom he installed in the Abydos temple after defeating the god's enemies and capturing the city. In a similar spirit the Hebrews carried with them into battle the Ark of the Covenant. Another instance of *hr* used of carrying a divine image is found in Thutmose III's annals (*Urk.*, IV, 652). The lion-deity Mahesa,¹ however, whose name we have thought to read here, seems known otherwise only in the Saite period and later, and has then no special connection with Abydos or the South such as this mention would

¹ A clear *h* and *s* are preceded in this word by a questionable lion, which might, as far as appearance goes, be equally well *mh*, *šd*, *d*, or *ns*. To read *nhšy*, "negro," seems impossible.

imply. Discomfiture of the enemy is indicated by the statement that "the people 'prevailed' not who had gone down against him." But this too offers an uncertainty; for the sign here read *šhm*, "prevailed," following a suggestion by Professor Breasted, is very peculiarly made. Yet an *š* and an *m* are clear, which are assumed to be phonetic complements; and there would even be room before the *m* for a *h* (invisible on the squeeze) which is usually present when the *š* is written. The functioning of *Dmy*'s piety remains, then, somewhat obscure.

3. *Foreign contacts*.—"I taxed the people of Wawat for any overlord who arose in 'this' nome" gives a naïve picture of the uncertainties of public life, except for such chameleons as our hero, who thus boasts his ability to suit all comers. As to "'this' nome," the text actually reads "our nome." The latter might, if hailing from more settled times, be accepted and compared with the touches of patriotism in Thutmose III's officers' reference to "our vanguard" (*Urk.*, IV, 650⁵) or the mentions of "our army" by Ahmose, son of Ebana (*Urk.*, IV, 7 and 9; pointed out by Breasted in *BAR*, II, 39 and 81), or the use of the same term already in the Middle Kingdom in the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* (l. 8). But in our case it is probably safer to assume either that in  a second *a* has been omitted by haplography or that, as in the tomb of Henku (*Urk.*, I, 77),  without the stroke was intended. While it is rather surprising to find Wawat, south of the First Cataract,¹ administered by lords of Thebes or vicinity in so unsettled a period, it is much more strange to find mentioned alongside it the raiding of *Gwt*, which is perhaps to be identified with Canopus in the far western Delta.² "At <his> command" assumes scribal omission of an *f* referring back to the overlord. Here again, the conclusion "I was praised therefor" is thoroughly Egyptian in attitude.

4. *Home life*.—"I furnished my father's house and filled it with luxuries" reflects unmistakably the personal benefits derived from our general's services to his ever-changing prince. "I made a boat of

¹ Cf. *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, ll. 8-10.

² Brugsch in his *Dict. géogr.*, p. 820, identifies the *Gwtwt* mentioned in the great Papyrus Harris (transl. in *BAR*, IV, 405) and in the *Book of the Dead*, where its writing sometimes includes the nome standard found on our stela, with  of the Decree of Canopus, which the Greek version renders as the name of Canopus itself (*Urk.*, II, 127).

fifty" is an extraordinarily compressed form of statement, paralleled possibly by a damaged Cairo stela, No. 20,504. A practically contemporary stela published by Moret (*Comptes rendus de l'académie*, 1915, p. 369) duly inserts the word "cubits"; but Uni's autobiography (*Urk.*, I, 108) and the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* (ll. 25-27 and 91-92) show that the Egyptian more normally stated both length and beam of his boats. In the instances just cited, the boat is a *dp.t* or a *wšḥ.t*; but our text writes only the word-sign, and the following *n* instead of *n.t* calls for a masculine noun, perhaps *wyḥ*. "I gave bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked" is a frequent statement in the tombs of early Egyptian worthies (e.g., *Urk.*, I, 133 and 143-44). Harkhuf (*ibid.*, 122) adds: "I ferried him who had no ferry-boat"; while Kheti I, a nomarch of Siut, continues: "I hearkened to the plea of the widow" (Griffith, *op. cit.*, Pl. XIV, ll. 62-64). Henku (*Urk.*, I, 77) varies his boast to "I gave bread *and beer* to every hungry man of the Cerastes Mountain nome; I clothed the naked therein."

5. *Death and burial*.—"I went forth *from my house*; I went down into my tomb," is the slightly more elaborate formula used by a contemporary named Ehi (*Urk.*, I, 150).

III. DEDICATION BY SURVIVORS

This is sometimes introduced as here by a relative form (so in *Urk.*, I, 34), but more commonly by *ḥn*. In writing "his first-born son," the *f*, "his," is not horizontal as usual, but seems to stand upright instead behind the determinative. The "first-born" word-sign following lacks its staff. The bottom of line 10 in the squeeze reveals only the projecting tips of uncertain signs which do not fit any usual title. The common epithet *ś·ḥnḥ rn·f*,¹ "keeping his name alive," is likewise ruled out by the traces. The writing of Hotep's title of "general" is confused in appearance on the squeeze, but its meaning is unmistakable. Initial *ḥ* in the name "Hotep" is rarely written out separately as here.²

¹ As on Cairo Middle Kingdom stelae 20,478, 20,557, and 20,751; cf. 20,417.

² Lieblein, *Dict. des noms hiérog.*, gives five instances, four of which (his Nos. 390, 1,475, 1,747, and α 217) are women's names. The other (No. 1,737) is found on Cairo stela 20,751, whose owner, *Nḥty*, had two sons: Hotep and Nakht. To the latter, who had a daughter Hotep, belonged Cairo stela 20,515 (Lieblein's No. 1,475 cited above) and perhaps (as Lange and Schäfer claim) 20,526. No. 20,515 is dated in year 10 of Sesostris I. Cairo 20,506 belonged to another male Hotep with *ḥ* written.

Judging from the position of the names, the man and woman represented on our stela are the dedicator Hotep and his wife N-teshnes. The squeeze gives them a false appearance of emaciation; their cheeks, which there look sunken, were rounded on the stone. Hotep holds in his right hand his baton¹ and in his left his staff. The latter, with a continuation above, does double duty; for it marks also the division between the reliefs and the main part of the inscription. The costumes are typical of the Old and Middle Kingdoms: a sharply pointed kilt for the man; a long, close-fitting dress for the woman. N-teshnes is exceptionally affectionate, for her hands meet in a complete embrace about her husband's waist.

Summarizing the outstanding indications, it appears that the stela came from south of Abydos, perhaps from Thebes where it turned up, and that its style and content together are appropriate only to the disturbed interval between the Old and Middle Kingdoms. While its numerous statements for which parallels were cited have been of value for dating and to indicate the accepted standards of its age, the *unparalleled* remarks are of course of chief historical importance. Those references to *Dmy*'s co-operation with "any general who went down" and to his collecting taxes for "any overlord who arose" in his district bring out most effectively the condition of unstable political equilibrium. Our reading of Mahesa's name, if accepted, adds agreeably to our slight knowledge of this deity. And finally, identification of *Gwt* with Canopus would indicate a much wider radius of attack than has heretofore been assumed for the early southern feudatories. The few Siut inscriptions of the period deal with attacks on southern enemies; our new text shows the South struggling northward. To our pleasure and profit, then, this new document joins the limited circle of its contemporaries.

¹ The baton is probably of the type shown in Lange und Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs*, Pl. XC, No. 543. The angular extension at its end would then be accidental, like the mark in the field below tip of kilt.